412 415 463 ists such as the ironsmith and tanner; (2) time-consuming work, e.g. pottery, done by women; (3) Unskilled and semi-skilled work that may require physical strength but is not time-consuming or can be done at irregular intervals, and is the prerogative of Amhara men (e.g. work in horn and wood); (4) utensils that may be made by either men or women (e.g. fiber and basket work).

322 [321] Category (3) includes items of wood and horn perhaps because traditional weapons and tools, if they were not of iron, were used by men, warriors, and the low degree technical development did not require a specialist. Ornamentation [531] consists of simple incisions, of rough geometric nature, in the wood. Wooden combs [303] together with their handles are whittled out of a single piece of wood. Wooden [412] mortars, that may be hip-high, are carved laboriously out of treetrunks by a combination of carving with adze and the use of fire. The pestle is carved, also by men, from a somewhat longer, arm-thick hardwood branch. On occasion [354] one finds a three-legged, bowl-like stool carved by hand with adzed and knives, probably in imitation of the Galla, for the typical Amhara chair of nobles and bishops is a higher hardwood frame with a seat and backrest of interlaced oxhide. The wooden plow, one-handed, [407] consists of a long, stout stick ("erf"), at the bottom end of which wooden wedges ("deger") hold the plowpoint firmly in place. A lighter yoke called "jengela" is [231] made for young and not fully grown oxen. All tools are collectively known as "eqa" (lit. baggage).

321 415 Horn is largely made into containers, also by men.

321 415 The Amhara warrior sought to have at least one very large horn containing mead (cattle was sometimes bred for large horns or bought from Galla), and smaller ones for gunpowder or for the staple mixture of salt and barbare, or nug paste. The narrow end is sealed with a wooden plug. In the past they were sometimes of buffalo horn, but now mostly of cow's horn. One observer noticed a striking similarity between this container and ancient Egyptian ones of smaller size, used to contain antimony for eye toilette.[65] [171]

Perhaps this may give a clue as to why the drinking utensils made of horn look so strikingly European, amid the other Amhara containers which are more African than Middle Eastern. Nearly every Amhara peasant has at least one large drinking cup of horn; besides the usual clay cups used for coffee. The large horn cup is used by the head of the house for barley beer. Churches usually have several, especially the "tewa" used at church feasts or memorial feasts such as tazkar. An average-sized one measures about 4-1/2 inches high, has a 5 inch diameter at the top, but only 1-1/2 inche diameter at the bottom. A church which has a large working retinue of däbtära and hangers-on, acolytes, etc., often makes a practice of giving one as a courtesy gift to deserving peasants at plowing time, with the blessings of the church for a good harvest.

324 412 The main stone utensil that men make for the house is the mano-type stone called "mäj", usually selected from a river bed and further shaped so that the bottom is flat and the rounded top fits comfortably into the palm of the housewife when she grinds the grain. She does this by a forward and backward motion, not the more advanced rotary

65. Cohen, Marcel: Flacon Abyssin en corne...Tr., Paris 1920, pp.265-6.